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STANFIELD HALL.

By J. F. SMITH,

Author of "Minnigrey," "Woman and Her Master," &c.



Illustrated by Sir JOHN GILBERT, R.A.
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VOL. II.



[LORD SEYMOUR RECEIVING THE RING.]

STANFIELD HALL.

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For this purpose he appointed Cromwell his vicegerent, or vicar-general, an office little inferior in honour and power to that which Wolsey, as legate, had formerly exercised. In this capacity his representative was invested with entire authority in religious affairs, and he was entitled not only to correct and visit all abuses, but to superintend the conduct of bishops and archbishops, of whom he took precedence in Convocation.

The important charge was placed in energetic but not in careful hands. In the suppression of the monasteries, the only object of the vicegerent and his commissioners seems to have been the plunder of the establishments. They visited the churches, abbatial houses, the cloisters; the monuments precious to art, the pages in which were writ the chronicles of the Saxon, Norman, and Mediæval ages, were ruthlessly destroyed. This Vandalism has and ever must remain a reproach to the memory of Cromwell. Abuses might have been corrected, false miracles exposed, without perverting the charitable intentions of the founders of these establishments, by giving the wealth destined for the poor, education, and religion, to a rapacious set of courtiers, who, like a pack of hungry curs in full cry, yelled after the spoil. The Reformation created, by the wealth it gave, the most powerful aristocracy in Europe; but then by way of drawback, it necessitated the Poor-laws for the starving and unfortunate, formerly entertained at the convents and religious houses. On more than one occasion they were rendered so desperate by the misery which the change occasioned that they broke into open rebellion.

There is little doubt but that great abuses had crept into the religious orders, and that the ease and luxury enjoyed in the great convents was frequently a stronger inducement to a monastic life than religious motives. The repasts of the monks were generally prepared with a lavish hand, and resembled a modern banquet much more than the meals of humble and self-denying devotees. At the monastery of St. Alban's fifty-three farms, every one of which was estimated at forty-six shillings per annum, were devoted to the kitchen. Provisions were brought from London, and nine carriers appointed to convey them to the abbey, which also possessed a house in Yarmouth for the purpose of storing up salt fish for Lent. The dinner was served upon plate, which was carried up an ascent of fifteen steps to the abbot's table—the monks, it is true, enduring a tantalising penance of making a pause and singing a hymn at every fifth step. At Canterbury and Peterborough the priors had usually repasts consisting of sixteen dishes; various kinds of strong liquors were used; and claret, piment, and mead regaled the jovial churchmen.

But in none of these establishments did greater luxury and enjoyment prevail than in the great monastery of Furness, in Lancashire, where the monks were of the order of St. Savigny,

under the rule of St. Benedict. They lived like nobles round the court of their abbot, who was a prince in his territory—a *ness* or *nase* of land, as the Saxons termed it, which nature had singularly protected on the north and south by dangerous quicksands, on the west by St. George's Channel, and on the east by the fells of Furness, which, until the thirteenth century, were entirely covered with wood. No sheriffs were permitted to enter this privileged spot—no tolls were collected within these hallowed precincts; nor was anyone permitted to molest the abbot or any of his tenants under a penalty of ten pounds. Secured from all interference, and emancipated from the censure and inspection of the public eye, the monks of Furness had every means of indolence and ease. Their forests abounded with the buck, the doe, the wild boar—once common in England—and the legh, or large deer; the convent was also supplied with wheat from its own fields, which were celebrated for their produce; and the abbot was enabled to purchase such luxuries as the domains did not produce, by the large revenue arising from the iron mines in the county, of which he had the sole direction and profit. Besides the possession of a breed of hawks, these princely churchmen had free chase through Furness; and that border territory as frequently rang with the echoes of the abbot's hounds as with those of the lay nobles. Besides this privilege, the abbey possessed large paddocks, and an inclosure called the "deer-park," which may still be traced near to the ruins of the monastery. The building, situated in a deep, narrow vale, of which it occupied the entire breadth, was surrounded by a stone wall, which inclosed the abbey mills, its stews for receiving fish, its kilns and ovens; while the luxurious vale, stretching down towards the south, was watered by rivulets, which spread beauty and fertility around.

Although nothing more serious could be proved against the monks than their luxury, the abbot was terrified into the surrender of his lands to the king. Most of them were annexed to the Crown. Charles II. afterwards bestowed them upon the Duke of Albemarle, through whom they finally reverted to the duchesses of Montague and Manchester, co-heiresses of the Duke of Montague.

It is not the Reformation which we feel disposed to quarrel with; but the use which was made of the wealth wrung from the indolent but charitable priests, to be bestowed upon the rapacious, exacting nobles. Many of the monasteries were so well governed, and the lives of their inmates proved to be so blameless, that even the infamous commissioners, Layton and Dr. Lee, were compelled to give unwilling testimony in their favour. At Westrope, the abbot is described as a right honest man, having about him only religious persons. The nunnery of Catesby, in Northamptonshire, was proved to be in excellent order and rule, as was the priory of Great Malvern, in Worcestershire, the superior of which, says

Latimer in a letter to Cromwell, "is old, feedeth many, and that daily." As may naturally be supposed, the breaking up of so many establishments caused much confusion as well as distress. At court it was a scramble for the plunder,—in the cities, weeping and distress. Lord Audley obtained Christ Church, in Aldgate, whose prior was always an alderman of London, and rode in the City processions as such; but when he offered the magnificent church to any person who chose to be at the expense of demolishing it and clearing away the stone, not an inhabitant could be found to join in the act, and he was obliged to employ workmen at an expense, when he demolished the steeple and priory, which far exceeded the value of the materials.

We have dwelt a little too long, perhaps, upon this theme; but it was impossible, in a work pretending to an historical character, to pass over so important a subject as the progress of the Reformation; and the picture of the life, government, and manners of so celebrated a monastery as Furness can scarcely prove unacceptable—it shows what such establishments were,

"When rosy monks and mitred priests
Ruled o'er the fertile vale."

This severe measure against the Church caused a serious rebellion in the Northern counties, where the Pilgrims of Grace, under the leadership of one Robert Aske, took possession of Pomfret, York, and Hull, obliging the Archbishop of York and Lord Dacey, who commanded the castle in the former place, to surrender that fortress and take the oath to the association. If at this time a competent leader had appeared, Henry's reign and the progress of the Reformation would have terminated together. The terms on which the rebels finally laid down their arms were somewhat exorbitant. They required that a Parliament should be held in the North, and a court of justice established; that no person north of the Trent might be forced to attend the courts of Westminster; that the Princess Mary should be declared legitimate, the Pope restored to his authority, the monks to their houses; that Cromwell and Audley should not be allowed to sit in the next Parliament; and that the commissioners Layton and Lee should be imprisoned for bribery and extortion.

These articles induced Henry to keep his army still in the field, and circumstances proved that the provision was a wise one, for a second insurrection broke out the February after, in which eight thousand insurgents were driven from Carlisle by the Duke of Norfolk, who, after their defeat, executed seventy-four of their leaders. Thus we see that the Reformation was not universally received by Englishmen as a boon.

The day, or rather the morning, for it had but just struck one, which was to make Henry VIII. the father of a son, at last arrived. The queen was in labour; and Cranmer, together with the chief

officers of state, were summoned, according to ancient usage, to be present at the birth. The king, who impatiently expected the event, was pacing, with hasty strides, the floor of the royal closet at Hampton Court. The Duke of Norfolk, Sir John Russell, the founder of the Bedford family, and the Marquis of Exeter, were with him.

"An Jane bring me a boy, my lords," exclaimed the anxious monarch, at the same time rubbing his hands in pleasing anticipation, "we will have a christening shall make the roof of Hampton ring again. What day will this be?"

"The vigil of St. Edward," replied the duke.

"If I am to have a son, I would not wish him born upon a better day, or to bear a nobler name. What was the last report?"

"That her majesty was still in labour," said the marquis.

"Would she were quick about it!" observed the king, yawning, for he had been up all night, and, like most stout persons, suffered if deprived of his usual rest. At this moment a low knock was heard at the door of the royal closet.

"Come in," said Henry, sharply, for he was naturally excited between fear and hope.

The queen's physician entered. Sir Anthony Browne was with him. There was a serious expression upon the countenance of both of them which augured evil news.

"What mean these hang-dog looks?" demanded the king in a harsh, grating voice. "Umph!" he added, "I can read them; another girl, I suppose. Was ever father doomed to be cursed as I am?"

"Not so," replied the physician; "but——"

"But what? Speak out!"

The man of science, as well as his companion, glanced towards the persons who were with the king, in a manner which seemed to say that it would be impossible to explain themselves in their presence. Henry understood the hint, and motioned them to withdraw. As soon as they were alone, he drew the bolt upon the door, and hastily approaching the physician, laid his hand upon his arm, and gazing upon him with a peculiar expression of countenance, whispered:

"I understand you; the difficulty you anticipated has arrived?"

"It has."

"And the child?" he demanded, with an agitation which rendered him almost breathless.

"Is a boy," gasped the physician, turning as pale as a maiden's shroud as he pronounced the words.

Henry paced the chamber for a few minutes; more than once he essayed to speak, but the words trembled upon his cruel lips, and a cold perspiration trickled down his already furrowed forehead; his mind was at last made up.

"It is impossible, you say, that her majesty should prove the living mother of a *living child*?"

"In the present instance, sire, impossible."

"When you return, let it be to announce the birth of the Prince of Wales."

Whatever he might have felt, the cold tyrant pronounced the order in a voice as clear and free as though the mother had never been the object of his love. An hour after, it was announced to him that his dearest wish was at last gratified—that he was the father of a boy, but that the queen was dying.

It is singular that the precise day of the death of Jane Seymour should have been so variously stated. Herbert fixes it on two days after the birth of her son; Burnet on the day after. The ceremonial of her funeral in the Heralds' Office affirms that she died twelve days after the prince was born. It appears from the register of the "Garter," page 410, that the queen was in childbed two days, and suffered exceedingly. It is certain, however, that she lived long enough to receive Extreme Unction, and hear that the young prince had undergone the rite of baptism; for on the day of his entrance into the world, in which he was destined to act so conspicuous, although so brief, a part, the infant was solemnly constituted a member of that church which at this period it is impossible to know whether to designate as Catholic or Protestant. The baptismal service was performed in the chapel of Hampton Palace, Cranmer and the Duke of Norfolk acting as godfathers, and the princess, or Lady Mary, as she was now called, standing as godmother. The font, which was of silver, was guarded by Sir John Russell, Sir Francis Brian, Sir Nicholas Carewe, and Sir Anthony Browne, in aprons, and with towels about their shoulders. The earl of Wiltshire, *father of the late queen*, bore the taper of virgin wax. Then came the Princess Elizabeth, holding the chrism, and supported, on account of her tender age, in the arms of Lords Morly and Beauchamp. The Marchioness of Exeter, assisted by her husband and the Duke of Suffolk, carried the child.

As soon as the ceremony was performed, and the usual gifts offered at the font, the unconscious infant was borne in state to the apartment of the dying queen, to receive her last blessing ere she expired.

Unlike Anne Boleyn, who had been carelessly hurried to an obscure grave, the body of Jane Seymour was conveyed with great solemnity to Windsor; and there buried in the middle of the choir of the castle church. At St. Paul's, and at every parish church in London, masses were said, and dirges sung, after the manner of the Catholic ritual. The king kept his Christmas at Greenwich, in his mourning apparel, which neither he nor the Court changed till after Candlemas Day.

The birth of a male heir to the throne was an event deeply

interesting both to prince and people. The estimation in which the former was held by foreign Courts was greatly enhanced by the security which this event gave to the continuance of his line ; and the latter rejoiced that the evil of a disputed succession was avoided : for there is little doubt but, had Henry died before the birth of a son, the utmost perplexity with regard to the Crown must have been the consequence of his inconsistent proceedings. To him, therefore, the birth of Edward was an event of such vast importance that it justified, in his selfish nature, the death of his amiable queen, Jane Seymour.

Henry's fourth marriage was with Anne of Cleves, to whose person he took a disgust on the very first interview. On the 11th of September, 1539, she was received at Calais by the Earl of Southampton, lord high admiral of England, and several members of the royal household. The Flemish beauty at last reached the shores of England, and was met by the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk. The primate conducted her to Rochester, where the Duke of Norfolk, together with the barons of the Exchequer, and a great train of nobility and knights, were waiting to receive her. Henry, who was at Greenwich, could no longer restrain his curiosity ; he left the palace without pomp. The first interview with his bride must have been highly diverting to those who had no anticipation of the serious consequences which resulted to his minister Cromwell from the disappointment. Sir Anthony Browne, the husband of the Lady Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Surrey's "Geraldine," describes the king as overwhelmed at the sight of the unwieldy consort they had chosen him. In the retirement of his chamber he gave vent to bitter disappointment, declaring that they had haltered him to a Flemish mare, and not a Christian princess.

From that hour the fate of Cromwell, who had concluded the marriage, was sealed.

He overcame his repugnance, according to the above quoted authority, sufficiently on the following morning to send her, according to ancient custom, a marriage gift, which consisted of a partlet furred with sables, and richly garnished with sable skins ; a muffler furred, and a cap. The bearer was Sir Anthony Browne, and the message was as cold and civil as possible.

The disgust of the king increasing, he determined to break his marriage at all hazards ; and as he could not decently behead the queen, he thought fit to divorce her. A Parliament was summoned, Cromwell arrested, and committed to the Tower, upon a charge of high treason, on which he was afterwards beheaded, and the dissolution of the union pronounced by the obsequious Legislature, upon the ground that the king's *internal consent* had been wanting. To do the fickle monarch justice, however, he behaved liberally upon the occasion ; sufficient revenues were assigned for the honourable maintenance of the princess, who received by letters

patent the title of Henry's adopted sister ; a poor compensation for the loss of a crown.

Catherine Howard, the beautiful, the frail, the culpable Catherine Howard, niece to the Duke of Norfolk, was next elevated to the blood-stained throne. The lady, as cousin-german to Anne Boleyn, was within the degrees of affinity to the king forbidden by the canon law ; it was therefore found necessary to frame a Bill, in which it was specified that no pretence of pre-contract or degree of affinity, except those mentioned in the laws of God, should be made use of to annul a marriage. This act involved the proceedings of the king in the greatest absurdity, since it condemned his proceedings both towards Katherine of Arragon and her successor. The only lasting result of this law was the precedent it gave for cousins-german to marry—a thing unheard of before, unless by dispensation from the Pope.

The life of incontinence which the new-made queen had led, both before and after her marriage, coming to the knowledge of Cranmer, he revealed it to the king ; her paramours were arrested, and she herself, together with her confidante, the infamous Lady Rochfort, committed to close ward at Sion House, where, however, she continued to be served with all the dignity of a queen. They were both executed on Tower Hill.

Henry's last marriage was with Catherine Parr, who survived him.

Influenced most probably by the disgust which the conduct of Catherine Howard had excited, the king conceived a hatred towards the family, and gave private orders for the arrest of the Duke of Norfolk and his son, the gallant, incomparable Surrey, who was condemned for having quartered the arms of Edward the Confessor in his shield. What availed his eloquent defence, his high renown, his poetic genius, and his knightly services ? An obsequious jury found him guilty, and he was immediately executed.

About this period the primate lost his most powerful friend, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, whose wife, the queen dowager of France, had long since disappeared from the scene of life. Henry, who was sitting in council when the intelligence was brought him, declared that during the whole course of their friendship, his brother-in-law had never once whispered a word to the disparagement of any person, and added, looking round the circle of abashed nobles, " Which of you can say as much ? "

All were silent, and the king quitted them with a strong expression of contempt.

Cranmer, deprived of this support, became the more exposed to the cabals of the Court, who, with the chancellor at their head, endeavoured to undermine his favour with the king, who, seeing the point at which they aimed, feigned compliance, and desired

them to make inquiry into the prelate's conduct. Even his best friends looked upon Cranmer as lost. He was obliged to stand several hours at the door of the council chamber in the manner so graphically described by Shakespeare, before he was called in ; and when at last admitted, his enemies told him they had decided on his committal to the Tower. The primate appealed to the king, and, finding his remonstrance disregarded, to the terror and confusion of the council, produced the royal signet, by virtue of which he removed his cause from their unjust decision. The members, who were compelled to convey the token to their master, were severely reproved by him for their perfidy and jealousy.

But if Henry shielded his friends, he proved relentless to all beside. Anne Ascue, a young and beautiful creature, who had great interest with the ladies of the Court, and who was an especial favourite with Catherine Parr, was committed to the Tower. The morning before her examination upon a charge of denial of the king's supremacy and heresy, Lord Seymour, the maternal uncle of the Prince of Wales, who had long been calculating the approaching death of the monarch, paid a visit to that regal den of infamy and cruelty. He had learned from Gardiner that the queen had incautiously given the enthusiast a ring—a gift from her capricious husband. His object was to possess himself of it, and by that means obtain an influence over the fate of his sister-in-law useful for his future purposes. Sir William Kingston, who was his friend, assisted him in the object of his pursuit ; for, like his wife, the governor of the Tower was attached to the Reformed religion, whose perfect development the still Catholic dogmas of Henry were opposed to.

The prisoner, a fair, delicate-looking girl in the first blush of womanhood, entered the chamber where the intriguing noble awaited her. There was an air of patient courage in her pale countenance which martyrs might have envied, and her blue eyes were lit with the pure light of faith. Modestly she inclined her head before the chair where Seymour had thrown himself, awaiting his commands.

"This is a sorry place," he observed, "for one so young and fair."

"It is the place," replied the maid, "to which Heaven hath called me. A palace or a grave, while I perform my Master's service, are to me alike."

"Know you," continued the courtier, "the fearful nature of the charge against you ?— that it affects your life ?"

"My life is in His hands who holds the breath of kings ; if it be His will that I bear witness to His truth, His servant will be ready."

"You court death, then ?"

"No ; but I do not fear it."

"Hast thou been questioned," demanded Seymour, in a whisper, "touching thy knowledge of the queen?"

Anne Ascue remained silent.

"Thou art a courageous girl," he continued, "worthy of Catherine's confidence."

Still no answer.

"Hear me," said the speaker, who saw that he must obtain her confidence, "for every moment is fraught with danger to her whom in these walls I dare not name. Two of her predecessors have left their names written in blood upon their fatal threshold: it depends on thee whether a third be added to the list."

"On me!" repeated the prisoner with surprise.

"Ay. It is known she we speak of gave thee a token of her favour—a ballas ruby; and unless the fatal gift be produced to-morrow, when Henry shall demand it, the executioner of Calais will have another journey and another victim."

"Supposing," said Anne, "that what you assert were true, how could a simple gift affect?"

"How?" repeated the ambitious Seymour; "men call thee wise as fair! Ask thy own heart whom in his anger or his lust did Henry ever spare? His favourite Wolsey, his consort Katherine, the joyous Boleyn, or my gentle sister, sacrificed—brutally sacrificed—to his ambition or caprice; but perhaps," he added, "thou wilt find a joy in falling not alone."

The prisoner, without deigning a word in reply to the accusation, advanced nearer to the seat, and fixed her penetrating glance upon him.

"Art thou," she demanded, "the brother of the pious queen, Jane Seymour?"

"Dost doubt it?"

"No, no," she muttered to herself, after a pause; "thou hast spoken truth; and yet I fear me for no godly purpose, for I can read ambition in thine eye, pride in thy heart. Strange," she added, "that two such natures should be so near akin!"

Seymour had heard of the particular powers of reading the thoughts of all who came in contact with her, as well as the supposed gift of prophecy which, according to popular belief, the prisoner possessed, and he asked her smilingly if she still hesitated to trust him.

Anne fell upon her knees, and remained for a few minutes absorbed in prayer. So fervent were her devotions, that while they lasted she seemed insensible to all around. Her visitor became at last impatient.

"Thou hast sought a pledge," she answered, "and it shall not be denied thee, since I feel assured that it will work the safety of the royal hand which gave it; but woe! woe!" she added, "to the messenger!"

"What mean you?"

"If," continued the maid, "thou dost, without one second purpose, one unworthy dream of future profit, seek to restore the token to my mistress, take it freely."

Seymour extended his eager hand.

"But if," added the speaker, "one earthly thought, one base desire, doth linger in thy heart, it leads thee to the scaffold."

The courtier smiled at the prediction, for he was no believer in her supposed gift of prophecy, although in the present instance it was singularly fulfilled; for the return of the fatal pledge so wrought upon the gratitude of the soon-widowed queen that she bestowed on him her hand almost immediately after her husband's death; the ambitious hopes nourished by which alliance ultimately led him to the block. He thought of Anne Ascue as he mounted the fatal steps.

"Take it," said Anne, drawing the sparkling jewel from her bosom, and placing it in his extended hand; "thou hast received thy warning—and thy doom."

"Doubt not my fidelity."

"I doubt it not," said the enthusiast, "for it is thy interest. Farewell," she added; "on earth my task and sufferings will soon be over; thine," she continued, with a cold smile, "are yet to come."

Catherine Parr, in her zeal for the Reformation, frequently ventured to converse, and even to dispute, with Henry upon points of faith. At such times, her natural talents and strong sense would often embarrass and irritate the fretful temper of her capricious husband, who had on several occasions complained to the Chancellor Wriothesley and Gardiner, both of whom were her mortal enemies.

These so inflamed his anger and his pride, by representing how glorious it would be to show to the world that no rank or station was independent of the law, that Henry consented to articles of impeachment being drawn up against her, the circumstance which finally decided him being the assurance which the chancellor gave that his queen was one of the secret supporters of Anne Ascue, and had even given her a ruby ring in token of her favour.

"If this be true, my lord, she dies," muttered the incensed monarch between his teeth, "were she ten times closer knit to our weak heart."

"It is easily ascertained," observed the crafty Gardiner, who knew the danger of delay; "send for her majesty; question her. If she produce the ring—"

"Not to-night," interrupted the king, "not to-night; I am weary; my tired spirit needs repose. You will find me in the palace garden, my good lords, to-morrow. Let a party of the guard

attend. I should like to see the terror in her face," he added, with a malignant smile, "when ordered to the Tower."

The procrastination of Henry saved the life of Catherine Parr.

The following morning the heroic Anne Ascue was placed upon the rack—yes, in that age miscalled the age of chivalry, monsters could be found to consign a woman, a fair young creature, to torments which demons only could behold without a shudder, and yet her murderers were born of women, and had sisters! mothers! Wriothesley demanded twice of the virgin the nature of her relations with the queen, and what she had done with the costly token of her favour. The sufferer was silent.

"Stretch the rack!" he exclaimed to the governor of the Tower; "we will wring an answer from her yet."

Sir William Kingston, to the honour of his memory and his manhood, positively refused.

The infuriated chancellor placed his own hand upon the wheel, and turned it till the delicate limbs of the sufferer were nearly torn asunder. Even the executioner turned aside, disgusted at the sight. The maiden's constancy was still unmoved.

Baffled in their attempts, the still palpitating victim was removed from her bed of torture, and condemned by the pitiless Wriothesley to be burnt alive—a sentence which was afterwards executed in all its barbarity, the noble-hearted girl, whose courage had preserved her friend, being carried in a chair to the stake.

The above is no exaggerated picture; on the contrary, but a faint sketch of what the martyred Anne endured; for she was a martyr alike to honour, conscience, friendship, and her God; and yet posterity, which has erected a stately monument to the time-serving Cranmer, who never once lifted his priestly voice against such barbarity, has not inscribed the maiden's name upon a simple stone. Such is the vaunted justice of time!

On the afternoon of the same day Henry and his queen were seated in the gardens of the palace, for the ulcers in the monarch's legs debarred him from all but the simplest exercise. The countenance of Catherine was placid, as usual, and yet her heart beat terribly, for she had been forewarned of her danger, but was partially armed against it.

"And so, Kate," said her husband, with a malicious leer, "thou art grown a theologian—a very doctor in dispute. We must be cautious how we encounter thee."

"You jest, my lord," replied the queen, secretly rejoiced at the favourable opportunity. "Women are unfit for argument, unless," she added, "in the hour of sickness to beguile their husbands of its tediousness, and make them smile, as I have done your highness."

"Umph!—say'st thou?" demanded the king, suspiciously.

"Man," answered Catherine, "is the stronger vessel, moulded

in God's own image ;—woman's was ta'en from man's : so should she draw her judgments from his wisdom, as he draws his from a still higher source."

The bloated countenance of the tyrant relaxed almost to a smile.

"Your grace, I see," she added, "is laughing at my want of skill ; but if I failed to amuse your mind by my weak arguments, the attempt was not without its use."

"How so ?"

"In the rich lessons it elicited."

Henry, who, like most sensualists, was susceptible to flattery, would have been perfectly convinced by the unembarrassed ease of the speaker's manner, had not the doubt respecting the ring still rankled in his mind.

"May be, Kate," he replied—"may be."

"Nay, it is, your grace," she unhesitatingly replied.

"Where is the ring ?" he suddenly demanded, "which I gave thee on thy birthday ?"

"Which, my lord ?" demanded Catherine, with coolness.

"The ruby, wench—the ruby."

With an air of well-acted astonishment, Catherine ungloved her hand, and drew the ring from her finger—Seymour that very morning had returned it to her.

"Gad's death !" exclaimed Henry, furiously ; for he imagined that both the chancellor and Gardiner had deceived him ; "have we been trifled with—duped by a prating priest and lying courtier ? There is work for the headsman here."

"Your majesty !" said the terrified queen.

"We are chafed, Kate—but not with thee, wench—not with thee."

At this moment Wriothesley, attended by a party of the guard, ready to arrest the queen, entered the garden. Henry, despite his infirmity, hastened to meet him, for he felt a touch of shame at the idea of Catherine knowing how nearly he had been led into giving his consent for her destruction.

"Beast !" he roared, as soon as he reached the astonished functionary. "Fool ! without wit or sense ; one word of thy knave's errand here, and thy resting-place shall be the Tower !"

"Sire !" faltered the chancellor.

"Another moment, and, by St. George, I'll hang thee, like a cur, from the highest tower of my palace. Brave not my wrath ! Be wise, and quit my sight directly."

In an instant the garden was cleared, and the still indignant monarch returned to where he had left the apparently astonished, but secretly delighted, Catherine.

"Be not angry, my dear lord," she ventured timidly to exclaim ; "I'm afraid it wears your health too much."

"The idiot!" growled Henry.

"Perhaps he has sinned in ignorance," she observed, "for I have ever thought that he was honest. Let me plead for him."

"Kate," said the king in a voice which was softened by an unusual expression of kindness, "thou art too good to suspect worthlessness in others. He does not deserve much mercy at *thy* hands. Speak of him no more."

It must be admitted that the queen managed her husband cleverly on this occasion; but then *she was a widow when he married her.*

CHAPTER XXIII.

Henry, of haughty mind and sturdy mien,
With fury reigned, and often changed his queen;
Disowned the Pope, yet kept us Papists still,
And burned both sides which dared contest his will.

THE death of Anne Ascue, and of other distinguished sufferers, during the reign of Henry, inspires the mind with sympathy; but perhaps the most lamentable, if not the most affecting, instance of his injustice is still to be related. During the small portion of his remaining life, the Seymours, with the Earl of Hertford at their head, acquired a complete influence over the king; and thus suddenly raised to power, of which they ultimately proved themselves both incapable and unworthy, they endeavoured to secure their greatness more firmly by the death of others. It is melancholy to view the consequences of faction on the reign of those princes whose passions have rendered them the prey of designing men. The brothers of Jane Seymour were supposed to be warmly attached to the Protestant faith, whose establishment had so enriched them. Between them and the Howards the most inveterate jealousy existed. This fatal passion proved the ruin of the noblest scion of the worthless stem of the house of Norfolk, a house which, in its long existence, like the aloe, has produced but one glorious flower.

Henry, Earl of Surrey, son of the Duke of Norfolk, had set the bright example, not of deriving his lustre merely from the splendour of his descent, but of adding to it by his personal merit. One of the most chivalrous of warriors, and most esteemed of the poets of his day, the virtues and accomplishments of this gallant nobleman gave more glory to his race than all the honours which flattery or apostacy have since secured them. In one respect only Surrey was deficient—he wanted prudence to give security to his pre-eminence in rank, in fortune, and in genius. Jealous of his honour, and fearless of personal danger, he could neither brook the slightest appearance of insult, nor the shadow of reproach upon his military reputation. During the last war in France he had distinguished

himself in various reckless enterprises, and at the close of the campaign had received the important office of governor of Boulogne, where he sought incessantly to add to the renown of the English chivalry by sallies and skirmishes with the French, and even by personally engaging with the enemy, to which he also incited his followers in imitation of the days of old,

“When Christian chiefs, by good Godfredo led,
Planted the holy Cross in Palestine.”

After an imprudent but glorious adventure, in which many knights and officers were slain, Surrey was recalled, and Lord Hertford appointed captain-general over the English pale in France, whilst Lord Gray, his bitterest enemy, succeeded him in his command of governor of Boulogne.

The warrior poet was not of a temper to bear this unjust and insulting measure with patience. Like the rest of his family, he regarded the Seymours as upstarts, and attributed his disgrace to their influence. His expressions of indignation were uttered in that ungarded and forcible manner which showed a soul incapable of treachery, by proving that he was above fearing it.

Unhappily, some secret foe conveyed this transport of indignation to Hertford and the king, and the noblest ornament of the Court was committed to the Tower.

Hertford naturally dreaded the power of the Howards, should they ever be restored to favour; and the Duke of Norfolk, politic and experienced in courts, feared the ascendancy of the Seymour interest; he even sought to avert the impending storm by an alliance between that family and his own. His daughter, the Duchess of Richmond, was solicited to marry Sir Thomas Seymour, brother to the earl; but that lady, although beautiful in person, was a fiend in mind, hating her father and her illustrious brother. She refused, *because the union would have saved them*. It has also been stated by historians that Surrey, on his part, rejected the daughter of the earl; but this is disproved by the fact that his wife was at this time living in the bonds of affection with him. The duke, who had long been separated from his duchess, lived with a Mrs. Holland, a lady of an ancient Norfolk family; and on the trial of that unhappy, but worthless man, both his wife, daughter, and mistress appeared against him.

That the outraged wife should have forgotten the vow pronounced at the altar—the mistress the man who had sacrificed so much for her—might not have surprised the judges of the father; but what experience, what calculation of human depravity could have taught them to behold with patience a *sister*, young, beautiful, and accomplished, appearing at the bar of justice *an unsought witness to criminate her brother*? The chief point of her evidence, and that which most influenced the judges of the noble Surrey in their

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